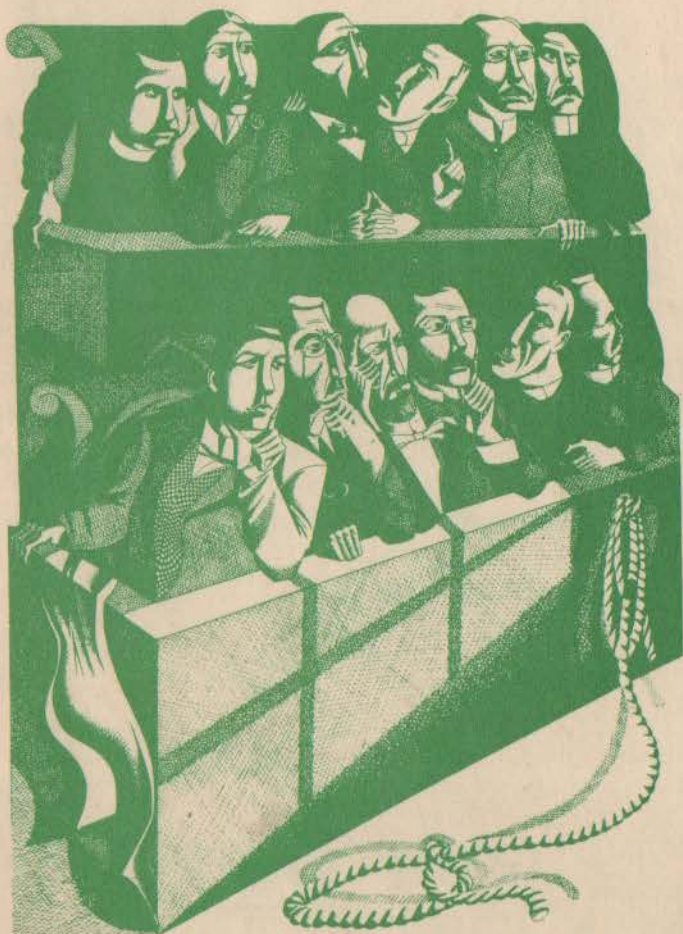


# THE ANARCHIST BEAST

The Anti-Anarchist Crusade in Periodical Literature  
(1884-1906)



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"With the crowd of commonplace chatterers, we are already past praying for: no reproach is too bitter for us, no epithet too insulting. Public speakers on social and political subjects find that abuse of anarchists is an un-failing passport to popular favor. Every conceivable crime is laid to our charge, and opinion, too indolent to learn the truth, is easily persuaded that anarchy is but another name for wickedness and chaos. Overwhelmed with opprobrium and held up to hatred, we are treated on the principle that the surest way of hanging a dog is to give it a bad name."

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"Hunger and Anarchy Stalk Nicaragua" blared a recent newspaper headline designed to send shudders of apprehension through its readers. Ask around about anarchy and you will get a litany of responses using assassin, chaos, infamy in the various definitions offered. The word anarchy rarely fails to invoke a passionate response from people. But upon examination the reaction usually is not grounded upon experience or knowledge of anarchy's definition, history or character. The question, What are the origins of the public attitudes towards anarchism?, led me to investigate the late 19th century periodical literature available to Americans on the subject of anarchy.

This pamphlet seeks to examine the pattern of attack employed by the mainstream press against anarchism, how that press fueled the attitudes of the American people against anarchism, and how the campaign led to the enactment of repressive laws against the anarchists. In doing this, I have limited my investigation to the English speaking periodical literature prior to the 1903 passage of anti-anarchist laws in the United States Congress. It was my thought that magazine articles would tend to more thoughtfully analyze controversial subjects and be less prone to vagaries of the moment. The final passage of anti-anarchist laws in 1903 was preceded by two decades of discussion, so that the periodical literature's longer range and more tempered approach (in contrast to the daily newspaper) offer an appropriate field for examining the treatment of anarchism during this time.

Before reviewing the anti-anarchist crusade of the 19th century a brief outline of the social context in which it occurred is in order.



Insurgent politics cannot expect a sympathetic hearing in the press of the society that it is challenging. This is not strange, given the position and relationship of the press of and to the economic system. In the first place, the press is dependent on the advertising income from the business sector and must generally avoid antagonizing this crucial support. In the second place, newspapers and magazines are themselves businesses that either sink or swim in the capitalist mainstream. The economic principles that govern any capitalist enterprise apply equally well to the media business.

Since any criticism of the status quo would apply to himself as well as to his business and personal friends, the owner of a large newspaper or prestigious magazine is an unlikely critic of certain things, e. g. the right to private property or the rule of an economic elite. In fact, persons of means often proceed to broadcast their opinions by purchasing or starting a newspaper or magazine, a privilege beyond the reach of ordinary people. So it is neither startling nor out of character that the 'free press' has by and large been an enthusiastic supporter of the economic and political system of which it is a part and has generally been an uncritical purveyor of the ruling ideology.

Thus anarchism, a new and radical challenge in the America of the second half of the 19th century, did not find a friend in the mainstream papers and periodicals of the time. Anarchism, the left-wing of the socialist movement, challenged capitalism, class society, law, authority and the state at their very roots. It asked questions which provoked a new thinking and anger among society's lower class, groping and trying to understand their lives and social position. The appearance of anarchism also precipitated a defensive reaction among the strata of society that gained comfortable,

often opulent, livings from the ownership of industry and leadership in government. Anarchism condemned state/class society and outraged its beneficiaries and defenders. This antagonism naturally found its way into the press.

In the 19th century America experienced the development of industrial technique and the rise of a capitalist class that took control of the new industrial methods for its own benefit. As the machine, the factory, the assembly-line changed the labor requirements of the owning class, the small farmer and independent craftsmen began to disappear. The emerging capitalism of 19th century America increasingly employed an urban, often ethnic proletariat. To feed the owner's requirements for labor, immigration increased and American colonization spread further westward.

This urban, ethnic working class developed by industrialization was frequently propelled into a politically radical understanding of its situation in the new land. Capitalism, with its periodic crises and everyday injustices in the workplace helped create class-consciousness among working women, men and children. The need for a socialist reconstruction of society became clear in the 19th century and the United States was the home ground of a real variety of leftward analysis, programs and parties. Capitalism, being in its young and crudely laissez-faire stage of development, tolerated these radical threats but little. Among the various groups promoting a new social order, anarchism, the libertarian wing of the socialist movement, was singled out for the harshest treatment.

To be more precise, among a number of different tendencies that might be loosely grouped under the anarchist label the revolutionary anarchist-communists were targeted for repression.



For in addition to the anarchist-communists of the immigrant working class communities, the new land also harbored a largely native born group of libertarians such as Josiah Warren and Lysander Spooner which might be called individualist anarchist. The individualists were mainly content with isolated utopian communities, monetary reform and peaceful propagandizing. The mainstream anarchist movement, however, was anarchist-communist along the lines outlined by Bakunin and Kropotkin. In the U. S. this mainstream tendency was important both numerically and politically as a significant portion of the radical opposition and as its most anti-authoritarian and militant wing. The anarchist-communists, such as the Haymarket martyrs, Johann Most, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were the anarchists attacked by the 19th century press and this pamphlet seeks to review this crusade the American anarchist movement during the last century.

The pamphlet is not, however, an exercise in pinpointing the reason for anarchism's inability to find wide acceptance among the American people. In addition to the repressive campaign against the anarchist movement other factors, both external and internal to the movement, contributed to its isolation. But the 19th century anti-anarchist campaign is one important cause of the American anarchist movement's difficulties and is a legacy that a new, anti-authoritarian movement must understand, expose and overcome in the present day. It is the intention of this pamphlet to aid that process.

## THE WORD "ANARCHY"

Anarchy was used for over three hundred years in the English language before its meaning was radically changed in the mid-19th century. Anarchy, from the Greek **ἀναρχία** means simply without a ruler, but the word has a history of perjorative use going back to 1539. That year Taverner was the first to use it in English print to protest "This unfeeling liberty or licence of the multitude is called an anarchie." 1 Bacon spoke of "anarchy and confusion" in 1605 and two centuries later the poet Shelley attacked "The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous shares has founded many a sceptre bearing line." 2 Religious and secular authorities were often the target of its use. Landon writing in 1824-29 spoke of the "anarchal doctrines of the popish priesthood" and Blackwells magazine complained of the "high sated wealth, decorous pride of place, Mankinds anarchal kings" in 1840. 3

With this tradition of use, Pierre Joseph Proudhon strikingly employed the word 'anarchist' with a very different meaning to describe himself an advocate of positive radical social reconstruction. In his book, What is Property?, published in 1840, Proudhon declared himself an "anarchist" to distinguish his political philosophy from those current at that time. "What then is is to be the form of government in the future? I hear some of my readers reply: 'Why how can you ask such a question? You are a Republican.' 'A Republican! Yes, but that word specifies nothing. Res Publica, that is, the public thing. Now, whoever is interested in public affairs --- no matter under what form of government, may call himself a Republican. Even Kings are Republicans.' 'Well, you are a democrat.' 'No.' 'Then what are you?' 'I am an anarchist.' " 4



Proudhon was not the first to articulate a political theory of anarchism but was the first to designate it as a distinct tendency and to name it. Most anarchists and scholars go back to Godwin in establishing the modern origins of anarchism. In his history of anarchism, George Woodcock places Godwin in the anarchist tradition thus: "In the positive sense in which anarchism is now understood, Godwin stands at the head of the tradition, for the arguments he put forward in 1793 with the publication of his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice embraced all the essential features of anarchistic doctrine. He rejected any social system dependent on government. He put forward his own conception of a simplified and decentralized society with a dwindling minimum of authority, based on a voluntary sharing of material goods. And he suggested his own means of proceeding toward it by means of a propaganda divorced from any kind of political party or political aims." 5

But it was Proudhon who popularized a libertarian approach among the lower classes of France and laid the initial foundation for a political theory of anarchism. Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin followed and enlarged, elaborated and moved beyond Proudhon's mutualism to a revolutionary collectivism, then anarchist-communism. The anarchism current in the last two decades of the 19th century was primarily the latter and its most articulate and influential exponent was Kropotkin. In common with the rest of socialism, this anarchist-communism censured capitalism for representing a monopoly which ran "against both the principles of justice and the dictates of utility." 6 The anarchists, however, continued their critique of unequal economic arrangements into unequal arrangements of power and authority. Claiming that each propped the other up, anarchism's conception of a revolutionary future included the

destruction of both state and capital, replacing them with an expansive and diverse network of federated groups on local, regional, national and international levels. The administration of things, from "production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defence of territory," to "scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs" would all be achieved with a minimum mediation of people directly exercising their power over these processes of life. 7 All the means of producing the things a people require for a full life must become the common property of all, used to benefit all. The anarchists distinguished themselves as the left-wing of the socialist movement by insisting that the course pursued by the state-socialists would result in class society again, albeit in a new form.

This new positive meaning for the word anarchy had to contend with the legacy of the old definition. As we know from the present usage of the word, the positive meaning never did eclipse the pejorative meaning, and the continuing contention and confusion around the term remains a current political liability that anarchists in our own day have to overcome. This continuing confusion is not merely the result of a history of passive, indiscriminating use of the word anarchy as both chaos and a political theory. Journalists in the late 19th century promoted the confusion over the definition of anarchy.

Anarchism was attacked and undermined in the public eye in various ways, few of which were honest or straight forward. It was a minority movement without access to the widely read popular press and thus unable to correct or challenge many of the charges and caricatures being printed in the mainstream press. It was unable to satisfactorily rebut the use of ridicule portraying anarchism



as profoundly illogical nor the frightening charge of senseless terrorism. As the accusations accumulated against the anarchists a certain credibility must have developed from the sheer numbers of charges, totally apart from their content or accuracy.

In the period being examined, anarchism received extensive and consistent bad press. The periodical literature employed several common avenues in attacking anarchism. Seven that predominated were:

1. The attack by way of negative definition.
2. The attack by way of identifying anarchism as the enemy of society.
3. The attack by way of refusing to admit anarchism's political identity.
4. The attack by way of dividing anarchists into opposing groups.
5. The attack by the religious community.
6. The attack by the scientific community.
7. The attack by nativists against immigrants and foreign influence.

Each of these attacks made its point and together formed a composite picture of anarchism as antithetical to the best instincts of humanity, as morally adrift, intellectually illogical, religiously unacceptable, medically anomalous and dangerously unpatriotic. These attacks over a twenty year period helped create the atmosphere in which congress and states passed laws against the anarchists.

#### 1. THE ATTACK BY WAY OF NEGATIVE DEFINITION

In the late 19th century the word anarchism was as definite a liability as it is now in the late 20th century. Many anarchists accepted the designation only grudgingly and set to work reforming

the meaning of the term. The label stuck for several reasons, not the least of which was the refusal of anarchism's opponents to relinquish the easiest method of discrediting this movement. The association of anarchy with chaos and confusion tended to blur the political definition, and many writers consciously reinforced this process. American Magazine was explicit on the subject in 1888: "The name these Social Democrats have chosen for themselves is as bad as their philosophy, as detestable as their practices. Whatever the idea that the word 'anarchy' may convey to the native of Continental Europe, no reference to Greek roots, no arguments based upon the fact of philosophy, can ever rob it of its shocking suggestions to an American. To the Anglo-Saxon, on either side of the Atlantic, it means confusion, disorder, the assassin's knife, the incendiary's torch, outrage upon womanly virtue, wholesale pillages: all these superadded to the black and hopeless horrors of such a realm as Milton describes:

'Where eldest night  
and chaos, ancestors of nature, hold  
Eternal Anarchy.' " 8

Both anarchists and anti-anarchists were aware that the anti-authoritarian movement's viability was connected with the definition and popular understanding of its chosen label. Half the battle was won if the public mind was influenced to associate it with everything unsavory or repugnant. As uneasiness and fears mounted by way of the negative associations, curiosity about anarchism and an open mind to its critique of society receded and the word became more or less an epithet. No one could be expected to take a political theory of sustained chaos seriously or view the embracing of such a theory by a body of people with anything but apprehension. The climate of fear and antipathy resulting from





In an 1887 Puck cartoon drunk and disorderly anarchists would seem to refute their theory that man can live without laws.

this crafty association of freedom with chaos and anarchy with disorder of course killed the support or at least the passive sympathy necessary for developing an insurgent politics.

While a very few writers honestly viewed anarchism as a serious political movement, most lashed out at it as a threatening advocate of chaos. These latter writers confused definitions unabashedly. In 1894 Public Opinion Magazine quoted the St. Paul Globe as giving this ominous warning: "It is a life and death struggle. If government is strong enough, anarchy must die. If anarchy obtains the upper hand, all order will be swept from the face of the earth, and chaos will resume its sway." <sup>9</sup> Anarchists became the arch-demons of the social Armageddon. Open Court, 1901, painted this picture of the future in the hands of these politico-chaotics: "Its doctrines can never become universal maxims. The anarchist's notion of liberty is license, his ideal of progress is the destruction and ruin of his betters, his propaganda consists in preaching hatred and spreading terrorism, the methods he commends are felony and murder. Should his ideas gain a foothold in the minds of our people it would not lead us upward to a higher civilization but back to barbarism, to a state of society in which the hand of every one is against that of every other and war is the general rule." <sup>10</sup> That same year, U. S. Senator Hill was quoted as saying that an anarchist "is a disturber of the peace of society. He believes in social chaos." <sup>11</sup>

Anarchism became a political kiss of death and was used indiscriminately against everyone from the true anarchists to the mildest of social reformers. This isolated anarchism on the left as well for liberals and social democrats scrambled



over one another in their eagerness to join the chorus of condemnation, hoping to prove their social acceptability and avoid the dangerous label themselves. Eugene Debs, head of the American Railway Union and on the way to becoming a socialist, complained in the American Magazine of Civics in 1895 about writers who hurled the cry anarchist at any social reformer. But he also attacked what he then presumed anarchists to be: "Their discontent is equally great and their vengeance equally fierce under all conditions. They are not the enemy of any government, but of all governments. They would annihilate government. They are advocates of chaos, and their method is murder." 12

Some writers, not content with the discrediting achieved by the successful binding of disorder to anarchist politics, proceeded a step further in their logic and tried to associate anarchism with another phenomenon then current, lynching. Despite the prominence of an anti-state figure such as William Lloyd Garrison in the early Abolitionist movement and despite the anti-nationalist, anti-racist principles of anarchism, several writers insisted on speaking of the "horrible anarchy of negro burning." 13 None of the writers actually attempted to claim that anarchists were lynching blacks in America; however, the association of the gruesome image with the movement undoubtedly furthered the confusion over the word anarchy. In a 1903 article in the Arena magazine, B. O. Flower was quite aware of the gruesome game he was playing. "The recent burning of a negro in Delaware, and the race riot in Evansville, Indiana, in which that city was given over to a lawless mob for two or three days, are a tragic but in no wise surprising culmination of the growing spirit of anarchy or lawlessness that

that for over a decade has steadily increased in certain sections of our country; while the moral contagion has continually spread over an ever-increasing area. This breaking down of civil government is, of course anarchy in the popular meaning of that overworked term..." 14

Inaccurate as it was, this hodgepodge of negative meanings took hold and the use of one word, anarchist, conjured up odious associations with disorder, chaos and its attendant murders, rapines and pillages. This confusion of definitions made the second method of attacking anarchism, the attack by way of identifying anarchism as the enemy of society, an easier task.

## 2. THE ATTACK BY WAY OF IDENTIFYING ANARCHISM AS THE ENEMY OF SOCIETY

Anarchism is the no government system of socialism. It believes that society can function more smoothly and more equitably with everyone owning the land, factories, businesses and banks in common. Unlike the state socialists, anarchists insist that the administration of the economy and of social affairs be done directly by the workers and residents themselves, rather than by being nationalized into the state apparatus. Under anarchism economic and social functions would be controlled directly by those involved at the point of production or geographic locality and coordinated on a larger scale through the federation of groups by industry and common interest. Anarchists are proponents of a decentralized, but also highly organized and sophisticated society where the interests of the individual and the community are pursued through the initiative and mutual aid of those affected. They promote and seek to strengthen what they see as the positive functions of their class and society in general. Anarchists



insist that genuine order and freedom cannot be produced by authority in any form, but that it must spring from the solidarity and cooperation among equal people. They reject the notion that the state, no matter how benevolent, can create socialism by directives or dictation without continuing or recreating class society. In rejecting the state the anarchist calls for both the revolutionizing and the invigoration of society.

The critics of anarchism in the 19th century could not separate their ideas of state and society from each other. While not exactly synonymous, one was unthinkable without the other. Public Opinion magazine quoted the Syracuse Standard in 1886 as making this typical pronouncement; "No compromise between society and anarchy is thinkable. By their very definitions they exclude each other, and they can not dwell side by side." 15

On a purely simplistic level this was true. Anarchism and the society in which that writer lived were indeed inimical, not because anarchism sought the destruction of society and all social relationships but because of the anti-social activities of the upper classes and the state. In its profound vanity, the ruling class could not conceive of society without their leadership, their example, their selfless efforts to keep order, to cultivate the arts and to provide employment and charity to the herd of people beneath them. To them, their social class and the state and society were practically synonymous and the elimination of one doomed the other two.

Anarchism acknowledged the fact that social strife was endemic to an unjust social order. Anarchists sought through agitation to awaken and sharpen the consciousness of the many in the laboring classes to their domination by the few in the ruling classes. Writers who could not envision society in another form, and they were the

majority — viewed and described anarchists as the enemy of all, plutocrat and pauper alike. To obscure the nature of class society and to retain the passive support of the working class, they portrayed anarchists as the enemy of all and presented the class war as the individual war against society as a whole.

If we are to believe the writers of the time, anarchists were at least consistent in one thing for two decades. Starting in 1887 they were "murderers of society." 16 In 1893 they "declared war on the human race." 17 1897 saw the hatching of a "great conspiracy against society" with "a policy of assassination against society." 18 President Roosevelt declared in 1902, "Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race, and equally against all government." 19 The American Law Review echoed Roosevelt a month later and added that "Anarchists are insurgents against civilization." 20 The Saturday Review concluded that autumn that anarchism "was a system to dissolve society and to leave it without government." 21

People are social beings and their lives are interdependent on family, neighbors, friends, and fellow workers. If anarchism was actually a threat to society, was actually anti-social as these writers claimed - then it was a threat to what is fundamentally human. Although the charge could not have been more untrue, it served to isolate anarchism from many people who believed it to be antagonistic to basic sociability and human community. The anarchist as outlaw began to find its first expression in this method of attack and was fleshed out further in the periodical writers' refusal to admit anarchism as a political movement.



### 3. THE ATTACK BY WAY OF REFUSING TO ADMIT ANARCHISM'S POLITICAL IDENTITY

Anarchism is a social critique of authoritarian class society and has the goal of moving society and persons toward greater freedom and equality. It examines the domination by classes, races, sexes, age groups, etc. and offers positive proposals for a society where classes will be levelled, power reinvested in the lowest and most basic units of society (the individual, the workplace, the community) and freedom expanded in every aspect of life. Writers often ignored or distorted this appealing political program. The 19th century writers refused to admit anarchism's political identity and instead attacked it for lacking a foundation in life and politics.

At times anarchism was trivialized as flighty and inane. Writing in the North American Review 1901, a Spanish nobleman described anarchists as "a strange, oblique people, and no amount of education seems able to cure them of their peculiar way of looking at things, for among them we often find men of classical learning... No one apparently knows what they want, least of all themselves." 22 Saturday Review drew a stronger conclusion about these "strange, oblique people" and the same year wrote; "The anarchists are really a survival of a class of lunatics which every country at some period or other of its history has produced." 23

More often anarchism was condemned as a frightening world of wanton criminality and menacing insanity. Politics was driven from mind as anarchism was described as "a movement of ignorance, counselled by desperadoes," 24 "dreamers dreaming an evil dream" 25 "crypto lunatics," 26 "moral madmen," 27 "hydra-headed monster of murderous malevolence... a venomous snake... a covenant with hell." 28 In a lengthier portrayal of anarchists in 1894, the New Review stated: "They

are reckless ruffians, fugitives from foreign justice, habitual criminals, or candidates constantly qualifying for imprisonment by daily malpractices, the commission of all kinds of commonplace crime... They are miscreants who are now aspiring to terrorize the world: the very dregs of the population, the riff-raff of rascaldom, professional thieves, bullies who batten upon the shameful earnings of the weaker sex, cut-throats when opportunity offers, despicable desperadoes already under the ban and always subject to close surveillance." 29

The effect of this vilification was to obscure, often deny the political character of the anarchist movement. It was total defamation, avoiding the unpleasant task of examining anarchism's social critique or of dignifying it by answering it in any serious way. It viewed anarchism as utterly non-political, as a sickness and a crime. Saturday Review clearly voiced this view of anarchism in 1901. "Anarchism has no program but murder, and any teaching that organized government might, could, or ought to be abolished should be treated as part of the murderous conspiracy... It has become a disease which is transmitted from one mad anarchist to another as hydrophobia is transmitted from one mad dog to another; and the mad dog and the mad anarchist have about the same capacity of reasoning as to the source from which they get their virus, or the objects they propose to themselves by biting." 30

What emerged from all this was a picture of anarchists so fearful as to scare many people away and prevent them from enquiring further. Politics and ideas were blotted out by the charges of criminality and irrationality. It was done rather well and the negative image stuck. The only drawback was the existence of several well known and well regarded anarchists who did not fit the monster described in many a magazine article. It needed explanation and



in giving one, the periodical writers further isolated the anarchists, even from themselves.

#### 4. THE ATTACK BY WAY OF DIVIDING ANARCHISTS INTO OPPOSING GROUPS

Anarchism experienced mounting repression in the 1870's and early 1880's. To be an anarchist was to risk facing the judge, prison, exile and sometimes death. As the area of freedom narrowed for anarchist propaganda and activity, and anarchists increasingly faced the scaffold or imprisonment, outraged individuals in the anarchist movement retaliated through 'propaganda of the deed'. No longer were the heads of state immune from the consequences of their actions and a measure of popular justice was served upon an elite unaccustomed to being held responsible for its capricious maneuvers.

The last decade of the 19th century saw the rise and abandonment of the propaganda of the deed. From many vantage points it can be judged unwise and unproductive as a tactic. It cannot, however, be condemned as a peculiarity to anarchism. Throughout history violence has been employed by all types of political groups. Bloodshed is no stranger to periods of social upheaval, and the anarchists of the late 19th century did not invent political violence. The mounting death toll from poverty, strikes, industrial accidents, job-related destruction of health, lynch mobs, routine 'justice', etc. cannot compare to the handful of royalty and rulers felled by an anarchist during this decade. The obvious, systemic violence of capitalism and the state dwarfed, overshadowed and ultimately provoked the limited, specific retaliatory violence of the anarchist.

But the miniscule of anarchist violence was seized upon and exaggerated out of all proportion by the press. Anarchists were presented as the perpetrators of massive violence against civilization

itself. The social context of the anarchist violence remained unexamined and suppressed rendering these events unintelligible. Readers accepted the writers' caricatures of anarchists as lunatics, moral madmen, criminals, etc. Save for one nagging contradiction - many well known persons in the anarchist movement didn't fit the gruesome anarchist monster invented for the occasion. Neither Elise Reclus nor Peter Kropotkin, both renowned geographers and scientists, could fit the lurid picture being drawn of anarchists. Yet they embraced anarchism whole-heartedly and used their wide talents and genius for the revolution, for the anarchist cause. The contrast demanded explication.

The solution to this contradiction was both simple and useful. The writers on anarchism proclaimed the existence of two different types of anarchists. In 1887 the Nation announced that there was the "militant or homicidal anarchists" and the "dreamy persuasive anarchists". 31 This theory of two groups of anarchists was then repeated again and again by subsequent writers. The New Review, 1894 tells of "two great classes" of anarchists, the "ideal and the real." 32 19th Century magazine spoke of the "anarchy of reason and the anarchy of violence" in 1901. 33 They became "evolutionary and revolutionary anarchists" in the pages of Outlook the same year. 34 The next year in Arena magazine, R. Heber Newton made a list of the two different types of anarchists. On the philosophic side were Kropotkin, Elise Reclus, Thomas Jefferson and the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. On the revolutionary side he included the assassin of Czar Alexander II, Paris Communards, Johan Most and Emma Goldman. 35

The so-called philosophic anarchists were separated from their less patient comrades and their political beliefs were trivialized. They were accused of propounding "far-fetched preposterous theories."



The reader was told that despite using the name anarchist, they "have no anarchy in them." 37 Their politics were called hopelessly utopian and likened to Catholic "councils of perfection." 38

On the other hand, the revolutionary anarchist was denounced in no uncertain terms for developing a program and practice in the world. "Is anarchism the social ideal?", R. Heber Newton asked rhetorically in his Arena article. "Then say the sufferers of society, 'let us have it now!' Plain folks turn an anarchistic creed into an anarchistic program, an ideal into a platform, and try to realize it at once... Such ignorant and unbalanced men, unfit to translate philosophic anarchism into political and social practise, abound in our society."

"The most appalling fact of life is the multiplication of the unfit. Paupers, tramps, vagabonds, the diseased, the insane, criminals --- These become the parents of future generations. So there is spawned on the world a host of degenerates, who form the raw material for every evil and for every crime. Their feeble minds unbalanced by moral forces, their ungoverned passions fired by vehement denunciations, their unenlightened consciences warped by the suffering and misery of earth, makes them the potential assassins of those upon whom they father the cruel wrongs of man... Through such men, semi-insane ideas work out an insane propaganda of the deed." 39

This great division of anarchists that the writers projected onto the public mind had two hoped for consequences. First, it was hoped that any intelligent, persuasive advocate of anarchism could be divorced in the public mind from the activist anarchist. The 'upper class anarchist', the theorist, the arm chair revolutionist was acceptable in his or her inoffensive crankiness and peculiarity. The 'lower class anarchist', who mixed activity with words, was a different breed and must be shunned,

banned, eliminated. The anarchist movement was pictured as divided along the lines of genius/moron, theory/action, idealism/criminality, utopian/mercenary, pacifist/terrorist, etc. Anarchism's political appeal was diminished by this schizophrenic portrayal. Anarchism was too unstable, unpredictable and incoherent to be taken seriously. Thus the anarchist movement was further isolated from the mass of the American people.

This alleged division among anarchists was also seen as an opportunity to drive a wedge into the anarchist movement. Robert Pinkerton, of the infamous Pinkerton Detective Agency, thought this division might be the source of spies, infiltrators and stool pigeons. "With the anarchists, a diligent and systematic search will not fail to bring to the surface those similarly qualified, who can join groups wherever formed. There would, of course, be lacking the strong religious sentiment and loyalty to the church that accuated the man who risked his life to weed out the 'Mollie Mcguires' ; nevertheless, it will be possible to secure the desired persons. The great majority of anarchists in this country and abroad are a sufficiently harmless body of men and women. They have what they consider advanced ideas on government or lack of government, but are unalterably opposed to all forms of murder and violence. They realize that such an event as the assassination of President McKinley or the King of Italy does more harm to their propaganda than anything else that can happen. Therefor, they are violently opposed to the perpetration of these deeds, and those who inspire them. From among this class of anarchists, there doubtless could be secured the material needed for the control and supervision of the 'Reds', as the members of the violent branch of anarchists are popularly known." 40

There were differences of opinions within the anarchist movement, mainly between the native



'individualist anarchism' and the main current of revolutionary anarchism. In the anarchist movement proper (anarchist-communist) these divisions were not as clear or definite as many 19th century writers believed. Voltarine De Cleyre, writing in 1903, said that the division between 'Quaker' and 'Revolutionist' anarchists was not antagonistic, each respecting each others role. <sup>41</sup> Certainly differences were not so pronounced that anarchists were willing to play police spy on other anarchists. It is also incorrect to lump Kropotkin and Recluse among the 'philosophic' anarchists. for they were both activists as well as theorists.

In each of these modes of attack on anarchism, the attack by way of negative definition, by way of identifying anarchism as the enemy of society, by way of refusing to admit anarchism's political identity and by way of dividing anarchists into opposing groups --- a genuine distortion of anarchism was accomplished. Combined, they presented a composite image of anarchism that would be repugnant even to the anarchist.

## 5. THE ATTACK BY THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Anarchism and the church have always been antagonists. The basis for their mutual dislike lies first in their different world views. Anarchism, along with the rest of the socialist movement, is materialist and scientific in its investigation of the world and society. The church, on the other hand is idealist, fitting the world (however uncomfortably) into the set of ideas it brings to it. From these two divergent foundations, each developed very different ideologies, actions in the world and the protection of antagonistic interests. The church in Europe had until recently (in the 19th century) been a primary political power in society. It was unrivalled in its intolerance of free thinking and science and had fully

supported the most crude displays of feudal privilege. The church had long played the role of a bulwark of reaction. Its exercise of power over the masses by the sway of ignorance and superstition stood firmly in the way of significant social change. The cooperation between church, state and capital was more obvious and integrated than now. \* As a full partner in this wordly trinity, the church was an ardent defender of the immutability of heaven and earth. It blessed and defended social and political relationships with its bestowing divine right to unequal social arrangements.

The church saw anarchism as a challenge to itself and its allies. In response, the church began its efforts to retain or capture the people's hearts and minds. The Nation in 1886 announced religion's engagement in this moral crusade: 'Especially do they find an unfailing theme and inspiration in the Chicago riots. 'The Gospel is the only remedy for Anarchism,' they declare. 'The only way to save this country is to prosecute the work of the home missions vigorously. We ask your contributions not simply as Christians, but as patriots.' " <sup>42</sup> Apparently the church had even more grandiose designs of capturing and converting the anarchists themselves, which drew a caution from the nation. 'Is the hope cherished of converting the anarchists themselves? 'We must give them the Gospel,' is a frequent expression. Is that the hope? It is foredoomed to disappointment. The anarchists are not strangers to Christianity. They are familiar with it in many forms, and most reject it in

\* This combination continues in our own day. Mel-drin Thomson, reactionary governor of New Hampshire tried to lower all the flags on Good Friday, 1978 to show appreciation for 'the moral grandeur and strength of Christianity as the bulwark against the forces of destructive ideologies.' --Minneapolis Tribune, 3/25/78



all. They are demanding what they fancy to be their rights, and they resent any effort made by the Church in their behalf as a sort of scheme in aid of the police ('black gendarmes' they call the clergy on the continent), or as a tub thrown to the whale. Moreover, they understand perfectly that the churches look upon their doctrines with abhorrence, and applaud the Chicago verdict. Next to the police and the courts, the churches are, it is possible, the precise objects of their strongest hate and denunciation." 43

Several other writers confirm this position of the anarchists by quoting various anarchist pronounce-ments on religion. American Magazine, 1888, stated "The extremists have no more respect for religion than for the family. The Pittsburgh Manifesto, which was unanimously adopted, declared that: 'The Church finally seeks to make complete idiots out of the mass, and to make them forego the paradise on earth by promising a fictitious heaven.' The Verbote speaks of religion as destructive poison. Freheit exclaims at the end of an article on 'The Fruits of the Belief in God:' 'Religion, authority and State are all carved out of the same piece of wood --- to the devil with them all.' " 44

An anonymous writer of a short story entitled "My Dream of Anarchy and Dynamite" included this in his fantasy of anarchists seizing New York City: "The special hostility of the Anarchists were directed against the churches. In fourty eight hours after the police first faced the red flag on Bowery, not a church spire rose above the cities outlines from Wall Street to Harlem. \*" The footnote then reads; "Among the writings of Johan Most, which were alluded to at his trial in November, 1887, was a description of the methods of using dynamite, and the amount required to destroy a church." (emphasis original) 45

In neither of the above cases was any further comment made. By implication these writers assumed anarchism stood self-condemned by its statements on religion. That they were vigorous opponents of religion was clear enough though and soon the church abandoned any desire for converting these political heathens. Instead, an ideological attack was begun on anarchism and the full weight of the authoritarian foundation of religion was pitted against it.

Rev. William Doane, bishop of Albany, drew the line between anarchism and religion in a 1901 sermon entitled "Anarchism and Atheism." He exclaimed, "before he has lifted his treacherous hand against the civil magistrate, or laid his underground mines to break up social order, he has dethroned God. He is an atheist before he is an Anarchist, he is an Anarchist because he is an atheist. With the restless force of the progress from a premise of unbelief to a conclusion of crime, the unrelenting and infernal logic runs --- there is no God to ordain powers, there are no powers at all." 46 The Bishop then pleas for the people to "bow down in silent submission" and that until all "are content to sit silent in the dust; till, with no shadow of question, we acknowledge God's presence and God's providence behind and in and over all, we are on the side of 'the lawless and the profane', the libertine, the Anarchist, and the assassin." 47

The ideological lesson the Bishop offers is quite explicit in the sermon. The pursuit of freedom is demonic, while the acceptance and worship of authority is right in God's eyes. The "whole thought of riddance from rule, and abolition of authority, and destruction of government, and escape from law, and independence in the sense of freedom from control, is godless and inhuman and idiotic and impossible." 48 Bishop Doane concluded with this ad-



monition to the beleivers; "Begin today with the warning in your ears, and let it ring there as the sound of waves in the sea-shells: 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.' 'Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the King.' " 49

Other religious writers were equally bald about religion being a strong prop for authority generally and earthly rulers specifically. The Catholic World in 1901 stressed the utterances of Pope Leo XIII on socialism and anarchism. In his first encyclical letter and on many later occasions he denounced "the pest of socialism and anarchy." 50 "These teachings of the Sovereign Pontiff are directed to the working classes and to people of various nationalities. They are all based on truths of sacred Scriptures, on lessons of sound philosophy, and the results of human experience. With our enjoyment of great liberty we need also the chastening restraint of authority, of respect and reverence for our rules, remembering 'there is no authority but from God.' " 51

Here religion announced its unqualified support to the status quo and the seats of earthly power. Its clash with anarchism stems largely from this investment of the ruling classes with divine rights to their position. An attack upon temporal power became indirectly an attack upon God as the architect of society's configuration. The Catholic World took the position that the anarchist ignored or forgot "what should be the great dominant principle of political philosophy 'there is no authority but from God.' " 52 Outlook magazine came from the same position in advocating "let us teach in our churches and our schools and through the press the divine origin, the divine sanctity, the divine authority of law." 53

Religion threw its considerable weight against the anarchist movement of the late 19th century. Its hold on the spiritual (emotional) life of many

people was used to add its very respectable voice against anarchism by counselling its adherents against the evil of freedom and revolution. It went to some lengths to illustrate the gap between a good Christian people and the anarchist. Bishop Doane beseeched, "God save us from this other anarchy of men who call themselves and count themselves above and beyond and independent of authority and law. We picture to ourselves an Anarchist in the unlovely personality of man and woman plotting, scheming, conspiring in the dark, or blatant and bitter in their denunciation of all government; cruel and stealthy and deadly, with the tail of a serpent and the tread of a tiger, and the snapping and snarling of a mad dog --- unsexed women and dehumanized men; such he is, such she is, in the finished development of their rabies." 54

The church did its part to prevent contamination of its members by these dangerous ideas and to isolate anarchists by exposing these obscene proponents of liberation for what they were, unsexed women and dehumanized men. The church came to its conclusions by the application of centuries of dogma and superstition to the anarchist phenomenon. Its judgement is not surprising, but it was an important contribution in the campaign against anarchism.

## 6. THE ATTACK BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

A much more unexpected source of hostility to anarchism during this time came from the scientific community. During the last two decades of the 19th century a nascent 'science' of crime or criminology was growing up around a Professor Lombroso in Italy. Lombroso was interested in the study of criminals generally, but had a particular interest in the political criminal, especially anarchists. His object in studying the 'political criminal' was dubious by definition, but more the suspect in that



his methods were both careless and self-serving.

His research consisted of the examining raw evidence gathered by legal proceedings against anarchists. Photographs, drawings, descriptions, etc. formed the basis of Lombroso's conclusions on the peculiarities of anarchist physiology and psychology. After making scientific pronouncements on anarchists for over a decade, Lombroso seemed to become ecstatic in 1900. "While I have had the privilege of making several indirect studies of anarchists by means of the data furnished by legal processes, the journals, and the hand-writing of the subjects, I have only rarely been able to examine one directly and make those measurements and craniological determinations upon him without which any study can only be approximate, or, we might even say, hypothetical. I had, however, an opportunity a short time ago to observe a real anarchist in person. . . " 55

Several illuminating admissions are evident in Lombroso's statement. First, that ten years of propounding a 'scientific' theory that anarchists are a physically and mentally differentiated group of human beings rested at best on a hypothetical construction. Lombroso's data is initially unsound, coming from police stations. He used mug shots to quantify the physiological abnormalities among anarchists. Anyone familiar with the arrest and confinement procedures common to police stations of all countries can testify that the surly image of the felon in a mug shot bears little resemblance to the real person in normal life, and that the enlarged ear or nose could just as easily be the consequence of a recent beating by the cops as an inheritance of birth. Police are not scientific field-workers, and all of Lombroso's data is suspect.

This pseudo-science was prepared to confirm and echo conclusions already arrived at. Lombroso and his fellow 'criminologists' continued a line of thinking begun earlier. Public Opinion quoted from the Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette in 1886 in which

the initial assumption of the criminological study of anarchists was stated: "The revolutionary anarchists belong to the criminal classes" and ought to be viewed in common with "burglars, pick-pockets, footpads, and garroters." 56 Several years later the physiological peculiarities of anarchists were mentioned in a short story by Wood Clarke in Overland Magazine. In it an anarchist sits down next to a capitalist on a train: "Gerald read on, but soon became aware that his companion exhaled unsavory odors. He glanced at the newcomer, who was of squat, brawny figure, broad, low forehead, heavy perceptives, greedy eyes, pug nose, and crude face. . . " 57 The 19th century press consistently attributed lunacy to the anarchist.

The Lombroso school of criminology with its 'scientific proofs' substantiated in the public mind three distinctive anarchist characteristics. They were being a criminal type, having common physiological anomalies and afflicted with mental illness.

An 1894 issue of the American Journal of Politics subscribed to the criminal-type theory by writing: "That among these 'isolated rebels' there are many whom the Italian school denominates 'born criminals' (criminalinati), is altogether beyond doubt. Prof. Lombroso, who was the first to initiate scientific study of the different forms of political crime; that swindlers, thieves, and murderers are always ready to join revolutionary movements of any description whatsoever, in which they find a safer and fuller outlet for their criminal tendencies." 58

The Italian school's theory asserted that criminal types have definably criminal bodies. Lombroso claimed that the physiognomy of the political criminal is identifiable and that this type "frequently appears among the Communards and the Anarchists. Taking fifty photographs of Communards I have found the criminal type in 12 per cent; and the insane type in 10 per cent. Out of forty-one Parisian Anarchists



that I have studied with Bertillon at the office of the police in Paris, the proportion of the criminal type was 31 per cent." 59 Lombroso went on to claim 34% of the Turin anarchists he studied were of the criminal type and 40% of the police photos of the Chicago anarchists also revealed this type. 60 Lombroso deduced these percentages by looking for physical traits he claimed correspond to the criminal type. The following table he drew up on the Turin anarchists illuminates his method.

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Anarchists</u>	<u>Ordinary Criminals</u>
Exaggerated plagiocephaly	11	21
Facial asymmetry	36	60
Other cranial anomalies (ultrabrachycephaly, etc.)	15	44
Very large jaw	19	29
Exaggerated zygomas	16	23
Enormous frontal sinus	17	19
Dental anomalies	30	20
Anomalies of the ears	64	75
Anomalies of the nose	40	57
Anomalous coloration of the skin	30	8
Old wounds	10	26

Tattooing	4	10
Neuro-pathological anomalies	8	26
<u>61</u>		

In Lombroso's later study of "a real anarchist in person" he applied the same type of criteria to his lone subject and confirmed all his previous conjectures. "His physiognomy presented all the characteristics of the born criminal and of the foolhardy and sanguinary anarchist. He had flaring ears, premature and deep wrinkles, small, sinister eyes sunk back in their orbits, a hollowed, flat nose, and a small beard --- in short, he presented an extraordinary resemblance to Ravachol. . . " 62 Lombroso hailed these results as "singular, and it seems to me that they should cast some light upon the dark world of these agitators." 63 Later in the article the reader finds out that no one but Lombroso thinks the man is an anarchist. The police, whom Lombroso had relied on in the past thought the man insane and talking nonsense. Lombroso used dubious technique in his dubious project.

Mental instability was the third characteristic common to anarchists according to the Italian school's theories. Being born criminal with a felon's physique had its compliment in an appropriate mind also. William Ferero wrote in 1894, "While, however, their moral faculties are sufficiently sound, the intellectual are not. . . Modern psychiatry has shown that there are many intermediate grades of intellectual weakness between reason and insanity. . . Now many of the 'rebels' whose characteristics we are examining are men that live 'on the borders of madland' and belong to that class of anomalous persons." 64

Another Italian school scholar, Dr. Olindo Malagodi found the cause of anarchist mental illness in



the "prevalence of the imaginative over the critical faculty. . . " When the "hypertrophy of the imaginative faculty" is mixed with inaction and "mutual psychological excitation" it produces "colossal imaginings of anarchical conspirators. And thus from the gatherings of these generally half-mad, half-embecile, half-criminal individuals, from obscure clubs met for drinking and chatting in suburban public-houses, there arises a continuous misty cloud of terribly grandiose plots against society, grotesquely impractical, perhaps, but beside which the most sensational revelations of the police seem insipid. " 65

A third member of the Italian school, Prof. G. M. Fiamingo, connected anarchism and epilepsy in an 1899 article in Open Court. He declared, "Science has demonstrated that the anarchist assassins are nearly all affected with epilepsy, and beings who would not steal a pin or break a single law, impulsively do the most atrocious deeds that cause the world to shudder with horror. " 66

What is striking about the Italian school's examination of anarchists is the absence of genuine scientific method. Its approach is entirely speculative and crudely political in its aim. Even in the case of studying anarchist physiology, which might potentially be somewhat 'objective, the class bias of the investigation renders it meaningless. Compared with the bourgeois norm, the poor and working class person is bound to manifest that she or he has worked hard and lived rigorously.

Lombroso's school and theories seem preposterous and laughable from our vantage point, but to ridicule them is to laugh off their significance at the time. The Italian school's theories were given wide exposure and enjoyed uncritical acceptance in their time. Their pompous pronouncements were translated and appeared in dozens of American magazines and papers. American writers incor-

porated the school's conclusions in their own articles. One such article, which was reprinted in three magazines, included this appraisal: "As he is, so is his aspect. His sanguine temper is reflected in the flat-gazing eye of spurious prophecy, from which his low forehead recedes. A lack of control is patent not only in his open mouth, but in the weak chin which falls away suddenly from his lower lip. More often than not a feeble body and unkempt, fluffy hair makes further advertisement of the idle restlessness which his admirers mistake for activity. " 67 The mental afflictions were also accepted and described: "The Anarchist's mind appears to desire something, but his muscles jerk in an opposite direction to his resolution; his hand is recalcitrant to his volition; and when he would pretend to serve mankind, he is impelled to make a dastardly assault upon a woman. " 68

The Italian school's 'scientific' conclusions on anarchists became an accomplice to the religious condemnation. Science was the new god of the century and many persons beyond the influence of the church stood in awe of science and its 'revelations'. Where the emotional judgements of religion failed to turn people against anarchism, the condemnation of science completed the effort. Thus science, unable to operate outside the confines of ruling class ideology, became the apologist and defender of bourgeois order.

## 7. THE ATTACK BY NATIVISTS AGAINST IMMIGRANTS AND FOREIGN INFLUENCE

The high school civics books have persuasively constructed the image that the United States acted with great kindness and warmth in accepting immigrants from many countries to its shores. Except for the Native American, we are in fact a nation of immigrants. But just as the genocide against the



Native American by expansionist settlement is obscured in U. S. history, equally ignored is a deep and ugly prejudice against the foreign born that has persisted all through its national existence, including the present.

Five million people immigrated to America in the first half of the 19th century. Ireland was the point of origin for many of them as the potato famine and hunger stimulated a significant migration to the U. S. Along with it arose a strong anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic feeling among the American nativists. Riots against Irish enclaves and attacks upon Catholic churches were not uncommon. Leaders of nativist prejudice arose, including Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, and James Harper, of Harper Brothers Publishing Co. A series of anti-foreigner groups rose and fell from 1820 onward. Sporting names like the Native American Party, Order of the Star Spangled Banner, Know Nothing Party, Order of United Americans, Ku Klux Klan, Patriotic Order of the Sons of America and National League for the Protection of American Institutions, they peddled a doctrine of hatred towards the foreign born and blamed the immigrant for any contemporary difficulty.

At its height of political organization in the mid-1850's, the nativist movement was on the brink of assuming national power. Already in 1855 it had elected Know Nothing governors and legislatures in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Know Nothing Governors occupied the state houses of Kentucky and California. Serious speculation arose over the possibility of the election of a Know Nothing President, as Congress was already significantly under Know Nothing influence. The question of slavery deflected this promising future and split the Know Nothings into North against South. National power quickly slipped from their grasp, but the spirit of hostility towards the for-

eign born remained a potent force among the established native born population.

Irish immigration had produced a parallel anti-Catholic prejudice. During a later surge of immigration following the failure of revolutionary events in Europe in 1848 anti-radicalism also became associated with the nativist movement. German immigrant radicals became special targets of nativist condemnation because of their political orientation, opposition to Sunday laws, and oaths taken on the bible, and their undisguised enjoyment of beer drinking. The Order of United Americans abandoned its anti-Catholic stance after the Civil War in favor of a bitterly anti-red foreigner position.

In the last half of the 19th century immigration quadrupled over the first half. The political situation in Russia and Europe had an influence on the pace of immigration, and the nativists often combined their anti-foreigner campaign with attacks on radicals fleeing hardship and repression in their native lands and seeking sanctuary in the U. S.

The Haymarket riot brought together anti-foreigner and anti-anarchist prejudice and the two became inseparable concepts operating in the American nativist movement. Of the eight anarchists framed by American justice for the Chicago labor disturbances, seven were immigrant workers, a fact that did not escape the attention of various writers.

Public Opinion magazine, May 15, 1886 printed seven pages of quotes on the Haymarket incident from newspaper accounts and comments of the day. Despite the number and variety of sources, a unanimity of anti-foreigner sentiment pervaded. The Chicago Tribune set the pace of the reaction: "These aliens, driven out of Germany and Bohemia for treasonable teachings by Bismark and the emperor of Austria, have swarmed over into this country of toleration and have most flagrantly abused its hos-





An artist's version of the Haymarket Riot

The Bettmann Archive



SHORT HOURS FOR ANARCHISTS—HOIST THEM BY THEIR OWN PETARD.

Culver Pictures Inc.

An anti-anarchist newspaper cartoon, 1886

pitality. After warming these frozen vipers on its breast and permitting them to become citizens, with the right to vote and hold office and take part in the government of city, county, State, and Nation, it has given them three or four times the wages they could possibly get in their own country, given them free schools, free care in case of destitution, and an opportunity to better their condition limited only by their own ability. The ungrateful hyenas have repaid this hospitality by organizing themselves into associations whose object is the destruction of the property, law and government of the land that shelters and feeds them." 69

The Washington Post pursued this theme further. "Anarchy is a tyrant. So long as he is permitted to stalk abroad unchained, so long will society be terrorized by evil threat and worse fulfillment. This is not freedom, it is subjugation of the most intolerable kind. It is the assertion of authority over the enlightened, progressive, liberal American citizen by a horde of foreigners, representing almost the lowest stratum found in humanity's formation." 70

The nativist's common reaction to immigrant activism and criticism of American society was to feel abused and betrayed. Political consciousness among the foreign born was proof of ingratitude to their adopted country and their enlightened benefactors, the native born. The patriotic concept of a virtuous America was personalized by many of the native born. America and its institutions were incapable of giving rise to radical politics, they argued. With its much touted freedom and opportunity to climb the social ladder, the U.S. could not be the origin of the attitudes commonly found among immigrant workers. The American Magazine, speaking in 1887, said, "The social atmosphere of America could not, we believe, have bred an agitation so hostile to the very foundation of the public order as this (Haymarket incident)." 71 The Nation on the eve of the execution of four anarchists con-



victed for the 'riot' in Chicago, supported the idea of foreign roots of the agitation in America. It insisted on the carrying out of the death sentence because, if it were avoided, "It would, in fact, operate as an invitation to all the ferocious malcontents of France, Germany, and Russia to come here and work out their theories whenever they could raise their passage money, or found the pursuit of the hangman in Europe too hot for them." 72

It was generally true that anarchism did find more fruitful ground among immigrant circles, but this was a function of class, not of geographic or of national temperament. The immigrant composed the lowest section of the American working class. Often their journey had been induced and facilitated by American businesses seeking a cheap labor pool from which to draw. Their position in American society did nothing to obscure the antagonisms created by the division of rich and poor, ruler and ruled, owner and worker. Anarchism, as well as all varieties of socialism, had an attraction as both an explanation and solution for their troubles in the new land. National identity and ignorance of American polity did not produce a partiality to radical politics, but everyday life in the American sweatshop did.

Writers in American periodicals did not look close to home for their explanation for the presence of revolutionary aspirations among immigrants. Often, on the basis of his own particular prejudice, a writer would ascribe the worst influence to whichever nationality stood strongest in his disfavor. The predominance of Italians in the anarchist ranks provoked much comment, and the national characteristics of Italians were enumerated. Italians were "Especially qualified by training and predilection for the dark deeds of the conspirators," the New Review announced in 1894. 73 Outlook explained it by developing the following theory in 1901:

"To understand them we must understand the Italian character and its capacities for devotion to a purely theoretical liberty." 74 Salvatore Cortesi, in the Independent, also in 1901, saw "the fact that human life is held much more cheaply there (Italy) than in other civilized countries" as a main reason for the number of Italian anarchists. 75 "Another reason which makes the Italian a recruit of Anarchy is his hereditary leaning toward secret societies," Cortesi adds, citing the Comorra in Southern Italy and the Mafia in Sicily as examples. 76 But while the Italians were a favorite scapegoat, Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Russians and the French were also cited as the particularly odious carriers of anarchist infestation onto American soil. More often immigrants as a group were blamed for the rise of radical politics and anarchism in America.

Even in cases where the facts did not support their bias, nativists fell back on arguments against foreigners. McKinley was shot and killed by Leon Czolgosz in 1901. The assassination naturally caused an uproar, and despite Czolgosz' American birthplace and a questionable grasp of anarchist politics he was paraded for the public as an example of the danger of foreign anarchists. R. Heber Newton, in a 1902 issue of Arena magazine overcame this disparity by pointing out that "despite the fact that the assassin of our President was born on our soil, he was to all intents and purposes alien; he was of alien birth and alien stock; his whole mind was alien." 77

The native born were higher in the social hierarchy and were distanced from the immigrant by custom, language and social position. A similar division was found among libertarians, with the immigrants generally championing a revolutionary anarchism and the native anarchists pursuing the establishment of utopian communities, currency reform, and preaching as unbridled individualism. Josiah Warren, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Lysander



Spooner and Benjamin Tucker were home grown individualist anarchists, but their form of anarchism fell on more fertile ground among the native middle class than among immigrant proletarians. The individualists rejected class struggle and violence, a stance which kept the immigrant mainstream anarchism from any supportive association with the native anarchist school.

To be an immigrant and an anarchist was to face a double hostility in the larger American community. Each prejudice lent strength to the other. The foreigner, already spotlighted as the origin of many problems facing American society, was identified as the carrier of a new and evil political disease. The anarchist, convicted in the minds of many by the methods described in this pamphlet, was isolated further by nativist reproach and barriers. A political minority, anarchism became a political minority within an embattled immigrant community.

## REPRESSION

At the same time that periodical literature was busy inflaming sentiment against the anarchists, many writers and politicians were carrying on a discussion of how these rebel women and men ought to be dealt with. The opinions varied some, but all called for harsh and bitter punishment and extirpation of these discomfiting advocates of equality and freedom. To the defender of late 19th century American society, the remedies suggested for the anarchist 'problem' did not seem extreme or out of line. A new Hampshire district judge noted at the time that in the case of the anarchists any reaction, no matter how terrible, was appropriate in suppressing their existence. Any means were appropriate because of the natural and undisputed right of self-defense, in this case assumed by the

'person' of the state. The judge asserted that "the right of the government to defend, protect and preserve itself against whatever evil may threaten is a natural, inherent, fundamental, self-evident, incontrovertible, and paramount right." 78

With such emphatic logic largely unquestioned, the problem was not the propriety of repressing anarchists but the method of procedure. For most people, the much touted freedoms basic to a democratic society were easily dispensed with in this surgery on the community. A contributor to a British magazine minced no words describing the task at hand and its lack of delicateness. He wrote: "What is now incumbent upon Governments of every shade of opinion, of whatever party or politics, is to stamp out anarchy at its inception, to attack it in its beginnings, and forbid by every possible means, and wherever it is encountered, the malignant propaganda of the Anarchist faith. Those who preach it should be silenced forthwith; to profess such dangerous and subversive doctrines should be held an offence of Lese majeste against the State." 79

This temperament of the times produced many proposals for silencing the anarchists. Some proposed the blunt, impatient 'justice' commonly associated with the American wild west. But in this instance the cowboys were members of the U. S. Senate. Some of these distinguished gentlemen were heard advocating "stringing up" anarchists on sight. 80 A Senator Hawley, in 1902, exclaimed with a fine frenzy, "I have an utter abhorrence of anarchy and would give a thousand dollars to get a good shot at an anarchist." 81

The lynching solution to the 'anarchist problem' seems to have had a certain popularity, inflamed from time to time by an 'anarchist outrage' such as the Haymarket bomb explosion and the assassination of President McKinley. But the popularity of lynching, judged by its frequent mention, was not often borne out by such extreme action. Few



anarchists were put to death by mob and police action, although their offices and meetings were sometimes attacked and destroyed. The more clear effect of lynch talk was the pre-judgment of guilt of the anarchist prisoner, and the legal machinery had only to follow and repeat this first verdict arrived at by the upper class and its public voices.

A second proposal aimed to suppress the communication of libertarian ideas by outlawing the anarchist press. The Kansas City Journal argued for this path in 1894, saying: "To strengthen the laws for the punishment of crimes in anarchy's name, and to prohibit the public utterance of anarchistic doctrines and the publication of literature intended to disseminate the doctrines, would be healthfully repressive." 82

The right of speech for anarchists, however, was never specifically abrogated by federal law, but it was attacked by state law in a dozen or so states and territories. However, actual suppression of speech did occur regularly by police actions against anarchist publications and by trials of anarchist writers and public speakers for 'inciting to crime' and 'unlawful assembly'. But this intimidation of the anarchist voice was most often attempted under existing, broad criminal laws. Often the general law was adequate for accomplishing the politically repressive task of making the libertarian viewpoint difficult to hear.

Another strategy was proposed by Robert Pinkerton of the anti-labor, anti-radical Pinkerton Detective Agency. He argued for creating a special police service to spy and collect information on the anarchist community. Pinkerton felt cheated that anarchists like Johann Most and Emma Goldman had not been sentenced more harshly in their respective trials and he hoped that "a service such as I have indicated should be established to keep the authorities in complete touch with these private utterances (of anarchist militants) which travel as fast and breed as much

damage in the end as speeches made in public. As for open fulminations, these should be placed entirely under the ban, and the police given practically unlimited powers to deal with the men and women concerned." 83

A special police service for use exclusively against the anarchists was not formed nation-wide in the 19th century. However, city by city, there were special police efforts concentrated on anarchists. After the Haymarket explosion Chicago police made a gigantic effort to infiltrate and disrupt a strong anarchist movement in that city. Pinkerton lauded New York in his article: "There the police have always carried on a relentless warfare against the 'reds'. They have even gone to the length of 'illegally suppressing their meetings'." 84 Local police efforts were the rule, although information sharing among police departments and labor spies undoubtedly increased after the Haymarket incident and trial.

A fourth course of action proposed against anarchists included different forms of banishment, declaring them to be outlaws, or enforced exile on one of America's remote colonial islands. Pinkerton again was a strong proponent of this technique. He argued against the "fetish of free speech" and "Instead of having any squeamish scruples, we should attack the evil in a rough-handed, common-sense way. I would advocate the establishment of an anarchist colony... Let the government set aside one of the islands of the Philippines" for this purpose. 85

Pinkerton was not alone in calling for the creation of an American Siberia. Henry Holt in two articles agreed with the detective and set down a progressively harsh program to stop anarchism in America. It began with the exclusion of anarchist immigrants, then declared domestic anarchists outside the law and open game for any action by patriotic



# Attention Workingmen!

————— GREAT —————

## MASS-MEETING

TO-NIGHT, at 7.30 o'clock,

————— AT THE —————

HAYMARKET, Randolph St. Bet. Desplaines and Halsted.

Good Speakers will be present to denounce the latest atrocious act of the police, the shooting of our fellow-workmen yesterday afternoon.

Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force!

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

## Achtung, Arbeiter!

G r o ß e

## Massen-Versammlung

Heute Abend, 7½ Uhr, auf dem

Heumarkt, Randolph-Strasse, zwischen Desplaines, u. Halsted-Str.

☞ Gute Redner werden den neuesten Schurkenstreich der Polizei, dem sie gestern Nachmittag unsere Brüder erschoss, geißeln.

☞ Arbeiter, bewaffnet Euch und erscheint massenhaft!

Das Exekutiv-Comite.

The New York Public Library

The handbill calling for the mass meeting at the Haymarket

mobs or citizens. Any anarchist not cowed or killed by the outlaw stage of Holt's program would be targeted for exile, then death or life imprisonment of any anarchist returning to U. S. shores.

Another writer scoffed at restricting immigration saying: "What they need is expulsion, and we have a few Asiatic islands to which they might be deported. Let there be no mistake about it — there are many of these people. It is not worthwhile to bother about importation unless we can devise a system of exportation." 86

Whatever the attractions an exile colony had for many in the ruling class, it was not implemented for the anarchists. The nation's history as a refuge from foreign oppressions was still fresh enough to abort this Russian style solution. But the tradition of free immigration was not strong enough to turn back a proposal that pleased both the anti-radicals and the nativist anti-immigrants. The proposal had some of the attractions of exile and put the blame for anarchism in American life on the foreign born. The restriction of immigration and deportation of anarchist immigrants became federal law in 1903 after fifteen years of debate on the question.

The political restriction of immigration had a record of failure in 19th century American congresses. But many attempts were made in the last two decades to legislate the exclusion of anarchists from American shores. This was the first group to be targeted for exclusion on purely political grounds.

The first bill introduced against anarchist immigrants was championed by representative Adams of Chicago in 1888. The congressman was obliging the paranoia stirred up after the Haymarket incident and trial of eight anarchist labor militants. His bill provided for "the removal of dangerous aliens from the territory of the United States." 87

A Senator Mitchell introduced a bill in 1889 to "prohibit objectionable foreign immigration, encourage



desirable immigration, defend American institutions and protect American Labor." 88 The bill would have made it unlawful for anyone who was an "avowed anarchist or nihilist... to land in any of our ports." 89

Other unsuccessful bills were introduced in 1891, 1893, 1894, 1895 and 1897. The most serious of these attempts occurred in 1894. Secretary of the Treasury at that time, John Carlisle, and Secretary of State Olney drew up a bill that was sponsored by Senator David Hill. It became known as the Hill Bill and gained easy and unanimous passage in the Senate and was reported out of the House Committee on the Judiciary favorably, again by unanimous vote. But it was sidetracked by one congressman, John Dewitt Warner from New York, in the House discussion of the bill. Warner's opposition was attacked by congressman Boatner of Louisiana. He warned that "the administration also urges the very great importance of passing this bill at the present session of Congress, owing to the fact that we are advised that a large number (500) of the most dangerous anarchists in the world are now on their way to the United States and that at this time there is no law on the statute books which prohibits the landing of an anarchist in this country." 90

But Warner remained opposed, the bill died at the end of the Congressional session, and the five hundred anarchists never showed up to gain admission to American shores.

But what failed in the 19th Century was made possible by an event which pitted the nation against anarchism as they had learned to understand it. Leon Czolgoz shot and killed President McKinley in Buffalo, New York in September, 1901. Czolgoz was native born, only tenuously connected with the anarchist movement \*, and not politically or mentally

\* Prior to the assassination Czolgoz had attended several lectures by Emma Goldman in St. Louis and

perceptive about his act. But to those already disposed against anarchists, the assassination confirmed the worst and most irrational fears nurtured against anarchists. A wave of extra-legal suppression of anarchists followed immediately.

The Secret Service now declared that it had "complete records of every known or avowed anarchist who has been in this country during the last fifteen years." 91 Emma Goldman was arrested and held for a month as an accomplice in the assassination, but was later released because of the total lack of evidence connecting her to the crime. A community of 25 anarchist miners' families near Pittsburgh was attacked at night in the style of the Ku Klux Klan and driven from the area. Local incidents of mob action against anarchists abounded. The widow and children of the Italian anarchist Bresci were ordered by the Cliffside, New Jersey police to get out of town. Scores of reports from around the nation gleefully announced that the utterance of any sympathy toward anarchism or any against McKinley were met with tar and feathers, swift jail terms, beatings, shootings, the lynch mob. 92 Hysterical newspaper accounts had anarchists plotting to derail McKinley's funeral train, to attack the funeral ceremony in Washington D. C., and to assassinate the governor of New Jersey. Nothing of the kind occurred, but anarchists paid a very dear price for an enigmatic stranger's pistol shots in Buffalo.

The federal law restricting the immigration of anarchists was given great impetus by the McKinley assassination. Congress did not, however, move as quickly as the mob justice meted out across the

\* (cont.) had been in Chicago, where anarchist circles found him so strange and disturbing that they printed a warning in their newspaper about Czolgoz possibly being a police spy.



country in the fall of 1901. The new President, Teddy Roosevelt, announced that the nation "should war with relentless efficiency not only against anarchists, but against all active and passive sympathizers with anarchists." 93 In his annual message to Congress of Dec. 3, 1901, Roosevelt included as part of his program the exclusion of "all persons who are known to be believers in anarchistic principles or members of anarchistic societies." 94

By early 1903, Roosevelt's wish was law. Included in the Naturalization laws and regulations was a requirement that immigrants swear that they are "not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government, or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed to organized government." 95 This repudiation of libertarian principles was incorporated into the immigration and naturalization process and printed forms and became the legal basis for excluding anarchist immigrants and visitors from entering America and the deportation of anarchists with less than three years residence.

The law was intended to wound the anarchist cause and make life difficult for its members, to disrupt its internationalism, and to protect America. The law itself was unwieldy and impractical, relying as it did on the victims' willingness voluntarily to admit their political 'crime'. Thus the new law was not terribly useful for excluding the 'foreign anarchist menace', if indeed such a thing existed. The numbers affected by the anarchist section of the law are not spectacular. "From 1903 until 1921, the United States excluded only thirty-eight persons for holding anarchistic beliefs, while it deported a mere fourteen aliens of the anarchistic classes from 1911 until 1919 when the red scare deportations began." 96 \*

\* This law is still in use. On April 13, 1979 a dozen Canadian anarchists were refused entry by border authorities on the basis of the anti-anarchist law.

The law's importance and impact, however, are belied by the figures. The foreign libertarian was made insecure in his or her entrance and initial existence in America. This could not but have a chilling effect on anarchist circles where the news of exclusion and deportation was discussed and followed with the greatest interest. The law also set a unique precedent in American jurisprudence in that a person's beliefs and associations were grounds for a judgment of law that meted out punishment, in fact if not technically. The passing of the federal law against anarchists, even in the limited area of immigration, resulted in giving license to the states to legislate against anarchists in more brutish, repressive ways than the national government dared at that time.

The great length to which different states went to circumscribe political freedoms in their campaign against anarchism is illustrated by several categories of legislation approved shortly before, during and after the passage of the federal law of 1903. For example, New Jersey enacted a law that made it a high misdemeanor for "any person who shall, in public or private, display a red flag, a black flag, or any ensigns or sign bearing an inscription opposed to organized government, or the flag, emblem or insignia of any organization, society or order opposed to organized government, for the purpose of inciting, promoting or encouraging hostility or opposition to or the subversion or destruction of any and all government." 97 Offenders were punishable "by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, or imprisonment at hard labor not exceeding fifteen years or both." 98 The states of Claifornia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan and West Virginia also approved similar bills against the display of anarchistic flags of red or black color.

Another category of state legislation made being an anarchist illegal and sought to muzzle the anarchist

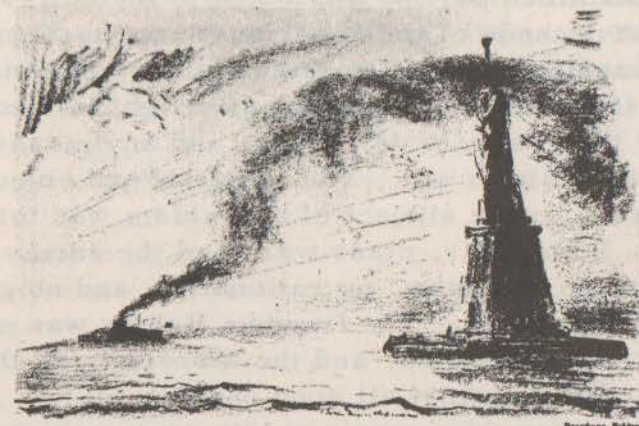
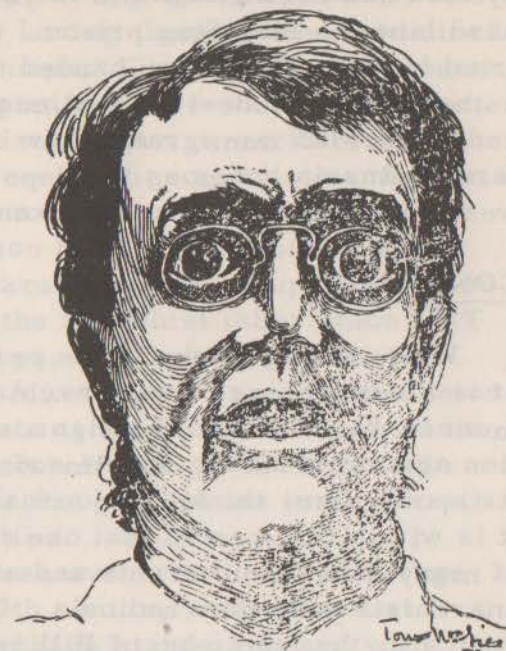


press. New York passed a 'criminal anarchy' law making the desire to overthrow government by force illegal. "The advocacy of such doctrine either by word of mouth or writing" became a felony. 99 Printing, publishing, editing, circulating, selling, distributing or publicly displaying any book, paper, document or written or printed matter containing the doctrine of criminal anarchy or being a member of an anarchist group was punishable by a ten year jail term and \$5,000 fine. Anarchist assemblies were open to the same penalties.

Criminal syndicalism laws belong in the same category of criminal anarchy laws and were intended for use against the Industrial Workers of the World as well as against anarchists. Striking at direct action methods used and promoted by anarchists and IWW's alike, criminal syndicalism made it illegal to have "any doctrine or practice which teaches, practices or advocates crime, sabotage . . . , violence or other methods of terrorism, or the destruction of life or property, for the accomplishment of social, economic, industrial or political ends," 100 South Dakota made "the advocacy, teaching, support, practice or furtherance of any such doctrine, whether by act, speech or writing, or by any means or in any manner whatsoever" a felony. By 1921 seven other states and one territory had passed equivalent criminal syndicalism laws.

If the use of the New York state criminal anarchy law is any indication, these state laws were much more frequently applied in suppressing the anarchist movement than the federal law of 1903. During an anti-radical witch hunt conducted by the New York Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities, 1919-1920, the committee initiated the prosecution of 83 people for "criminal anarchy". Not all those accused were anarchists. Members of the Communist Party, ironically, also were charged under the criminal anarchy statute. Those convicted

The Symbol, from the front page of the New York World, August 17, 1897. The caption read, "Anarchist Emma Goldman, who prefers Hell to Heaven."



"The Sailing of the Buford," from the Liberator, February, 1920.



by 1920 had been given 4 to 10 year sentences at hard labor in Sing Sing prison. Others were never tried because they were handed over to Federal authorities as undesirable aliens and were deported under the 1903 immigration law on the U. S. S. Buford to Russia. Among the deportees on the ship were Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman.

## CONCLUSION

What is noteworthy of the period we have looked at is the beginning of an anarchist-communist movement in America and the vigorous, hysterical reaction against it among the American ruling class and its spokesmen, thinkers, journalists and police. It is within this period that one can discover the roots of many subsequent events and attitudes towards anarchists and other radicals. The deportations of radicals, the frame-up of Billings and Mooney, the Palmer raids, the murder of Salsedo and the arrest and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and the continuing prejudice and anti-anarchist disposition among people today, can all in part be attributed to the anti-anarchist crusade of the late 19th century. The crusade against the militant, anti-authoritarian wing of socialism was taken up as a fight to the death by the system's defenders, and any means was appropriate to win. The integrity and objectivity of the press on the subject of anarchism was totally lacking. It was war, class war, and the enemy had no rights, no humanity, no rationality, and no good cause for rebellion. The freedom fighter was made to appear as the demon, and the terrorist, as the danger lurking against all good people.

What makes this review of 19th century history pertinent is that many of the same methods described in this pamphlet are today still employed by the ruling classes. Italy bans anarchists to remote islands. Germany tortures its political prisoners

with sensory deprivation, impugns their sanity and begs our credulity by having them "commit suicide" individually and in groups. Great Britain concocts anarchist bomb conspiracies on evidence such as common electrical wire, sugar, weed killer and persons unknown. Greek police round up anarchists and use the possession of a book, the Anarchist Cookbook, as a reason to pack them off to jail. In Spain right-wing para-military groups and police attempt to terrorize the anarchist labor union CNT with night time beatings, fire bombings, arrests and confinement. In America we have the exclusion of Canadian anarchists at the border and militants such as Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, Carl Harp, Rita Brown and ex-SLAers are singled out for the wrath of our prison authorities.

Common to all these events is press coverage very similar to the 19th century anti-anarchist crusade. That old crusade stands exposed with the passage of time. Before joining the present day chorus condemning libertarian activists one must examine the motives behind and methods of these critical voices. Whatever tactical differences we may have with these activists, let us strike at the calumnies and distortions our mutual antagonists, the state and the ruling class, use against all of us.



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This is Soil of Liberty's third pamphlet. Sam Dolgoff authored the first two, The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society and A Critique of Marxism. We recently reprinted the first of Sam's pamphlets and copies of both pamphlets are still available.

Nhat Hong is a printer and a member of the group that produces Soil of Liberty. He had occasion to research this topic during a period of unemployment while going through the interminable process of fighting an unfair labor practice through the NLRB bureaucracy. Special thanks goes to his former employer for providing him with an involuntary research grant.

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